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NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

WORK OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES NOT INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Report of the workshop of the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. By its decision 31/CP.7, the Conference of the Parties (COP), at its seventh session, decided that the Consultative Group of Experts on National Communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (CGE) shall have the objective of improving the preparation of national communications from Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention (non-Annex I Parties). By the same decision (para. 3), the COP also decided that, in addition to its mandate contained in the annex to decision 8/CP.5, the CGE shall identify and assess technical problems and constraints that have affected the preparation of initial national communications from non-Annex I Parties that have yet to complete them, and make recommendations for consideration by the subsidiary bodies, and shall also provide input to the draft improved guidelines for the preparation of national communications from non-Annex I Parties.

2. By the same decision, the COP further decided that the CGE shall conduct two workshops in the year 2002, with the objective of sharing experiences to ensure adequate coverage of issues referred to in paragraph 3 of the decision.

B. Scope of the report

3. The report of the first workshop is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2002/INF.3. This is the report of the second workshop. The input of the CGE to the draft improved guidelines for the preparation of national communications from non-Annex I Parties is contained in document FCCC/SBI/2002/INF.8.

4. This document summarizes the proceedings of the workshop (section II) and the discussions on the problems and constraints relating to the preparation of national communications, particularly those that have affected non-Annex I Parties that have yet to complete them (section III). Section IV outlines the experiences of, and lessons learned by, multilateral and bilateral support programmes in facilitating and providing financial and technical support to non-Annex I Parties in the preparation of their initial national communications or elements thereof. Section V presents recommendations for improving the process of the preparation of the various elements of national communications from non-Annex I Parties.

C. Possible action by the subsidiary bodies

5. The subsidiary bodies may wish to take note of this report, and recommend a draft decision on further guidance to the CGE, including its new mandate and terms of reference, for adoption by the COP at its eighth session.

II. PROCEEDINGS

6. Following the offer of the Government of the Bahamas to host the CGE workshop, this workshop was held in Nassau from 8 to 10 August 2002. A total of 38 experts representing 27 countries (10 from Africa, four from Asia and the Pacific, seven from Latin America and the Caribbean, and six from Annex I Parties) and 13 bilateral and multilateral organizations participated.[1]

7. The workshop was chaired by Ms. Isabelle Niang-Diop (Senegal), in her capacity as the current Chair of the CGE. In welcoming the experts to the workshop, she recalled that the CGE had made

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[1] The lists of participants and of multilateral and bilateral organizations are posted on the UNFCCC web site (http://unfccc.int/sessions/workshop/080802/index.html).

considerable progress in the discharge of its work aimed at improving the process of the preparation of national communications, pursuant to decisions 8/CP.5 and 31/CP.7. She also acknowledged the excellent support provided by the secretariat to the CGE to conduct its work in an expeditious manner.

8. Ms. Niang-Diop noted that at the first CGE workshop, held in Bonn, Germany, from 10 to 12 April 2002, technical problems and constraints of seven non-Annex I Parties[2] who had not yet submitted their initial national communications had been identified.

9. The second workshop heard presentations by 10 non-Annex I Parties that have yet to complete their initial national communications, namely: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Dominican Republic, Gabon, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The presentations covered technical problems and constraints relating to the preparation of the various elements of the initial national communication: national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories; vulnerability and adaptation assessments; GHG mitigation analysis; research and systematic observation; and the cross-cutting issues of education, training and public awareness. Problems relating to the institutional arrangements for the preparation of national communications were also covered. Discussions following the presentations focused on providing some conclusions as to how such problems and constraints could be overcome.

10. In response to a proposal by the CGE at its fourth meeting (FCCC/SBI/2002/2) to elaborate further its work relating to the review of existing activities and programmes which facilitated and supported the preparation of national communications, five bilateral and eight multilateral agencies presented and exchanged experiences on the support they facilitated and provided to non-Annex I Parties in the preparation of their initial national communications.

11. The presentations were followed by general discussions, on the types and level of assistance provided and the experiences gained and lessons learned that may help enhance the process of preparation of national communications in non-Annex I Parties.

12. The conclusions and recommendations from the presentations and the ensuing discussions provided an input to the report of the CGE to the subsidiary bodies (FCCC/SBI/2002/15).

III. PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS OF NON-ANNEX I PARTIES THAT HAVE YET TO SUBMIT THEIR INITIAL NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

13. The presentations at the workshop by those countries that have yet to complete their initial national communications indicated that the main problems and constraints were related to the lack of expertise and appropriate data sets to enable timely preparation of national GHG inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments and GHG mitigation analysis, and an incapacity to conduct and promote research and systematic observation, climate change education, training and public awareness, and information exchange and networking. These problems and constraints were exacerbated by the general lack of human, financial and technical resources in these countries.

A. Institutional arrangements

14. Many Parties indicated that they generally had limited experience/expertise, technical capacity and financial resources for the preparation of their initial national communications. Some Parties reported that they had lost expertise and/or skills due to long periods of inactivity pertaining to the preparation of initial national communication, which were caused by long delays in the disbursement of financial resources and provision of technical support. In addition, some Parties mentioned that there

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[2] Albania, Brazil, Fiji, Islamic Republic of Iran, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and South Africa.

was a high turnover of staff, which also often made it difficult to complete assigned tasks and activities relating to the preparation of national communication.

15. One of the main difficulties identified by some of these Parties was a general lack of clarity over the roles and responsibilities of their national institutions and of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies relating to the preparation of national communications.

16. Many Parties identified a low level of inter-ministerial and/or inter-agency coordination as a major constraint in the preparation of national communications. In some of these countries there are no units responsible for climate change work in the ministries or technical institutions.

17. Other difficulties mentioned, in particular by the small island developing States and least developed countries, were the lack of existing national research/training institutions and the limited participation in and insufficient understanding of climate change issues and activities. Such deficiencies contributed to the general lack of capacity available to develop national climate change policies or strategies in these countries.

18. Some Parties reported that their progress in the preparation of their initial national communications was affected by difficulties in obtaining data from a wide range of public and private sector organizations.

19. One Party reported that it had experienced long delays in completing its initial national communication, because of social unrest and/or political problems.

B. National greenhouse gas inventories

20. Methodological and technical problems were encountered in completing the national GHG inventories. These problems were related to the fact that the use of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) default values, particularly in agriculture, land-use change and forestry (LUCF), energy and waste sectors, did not always reflect national circumstances (e.g. variations in soils and topography), and lack of and/or limited number of experts available in the country made it difficult to carry out the inventory work.

21. Additionally, inventory work in some of these countries was constrained by the lack of readily available activity data, particularly for the LUCF and agriculture sectors. This led to large inconsistencies and uncertainties in their inventories. Some Parties found that data were available for some sectors, but not always in a format that could be easily used in the inventory estimations.

22. Other Parties mentioned the often high cost of acquiring and processing satellite imagery data relevant for estimation of emissions and/or removals in the LUCF sector.

C. Vulnerability and adaptation assessments

23. Vulnerability and adaptation assessments in many countries were constrained by difficulties encountered in the use of the IPCC Technical Guidelines on Assessment of Impacts and Adaptations to Climate Change. These difficulties were attributed by many of those Parties to their limited local capacity/expertise available to apply and use the IPCC Guidelines and the integrated assessment models, and to use regional models/scenarios for climate change appropriately. In addition, some Parties indicated that the currently large differences inherent in the outputs of various global circulation models (GCM) meant that there was low confidence in the results of analyses based on these outputs.

24. One Party stressed that it had experienced considerable difficulties in conducting detailed studies in various sectors because it lacked new and user-friendly technology (software) and reliable data.

D. GHG mitigation analysis

25. Some Parties reported lack of data, and lack of expertise/skills in applying and using climate change mitigation models and those models/software available for construction of GHG emission scenarios in all sectors. Some Parties mentioned that the absence of common guidelines for assessing and reporting potential mitigation options greatly affected the preparation of GHG mitigation analysis.

26. Some Parties indicated that many of the difficulties they encountered in implementing proposed potential mitigation options were due to low awareness about such options among their policy makers.

E. Research and systematic observation

27. Many Parties mentioned that the preparation of their initial national communication or the elements thereof was affected by their limited technical capacity and research activities and/or capabilities to collect, access, analyse and manage data, which was further hampered by the lack of monitoring equipment/tools, insufficient observational data, lack of trained/skilled personnel and large gaps in climate data and databases. Some Parties mentioned that it was important for local/regional universities and research institutions to conduct and participate in climate change/environmental research activities, and that in some cases such research institutions do not exist. Many Parties also expressed their concerns about the deteriorating state of their observation networks, which could threaten climate monitoring and detection.

F. Education, training and public awareness

28. Many Parties considered the promotion of climate change education, training and public awareness as critical. However, many stated that lack of resources prevented them from undertaking these activities effectively. Others pointed out that climate change issues were not well covered by the local/national media, which contributed to a general lack of awareness of climate change issues among policy stakeholders and the general public.

29. Some Parties reported that their attempts to incorporate climate change issues into the school curriculum were constrained by the limited human, financial and technical resources.

G. Information and networking

30. Some Parties indicated that national climate change expert teams and institutions often lacked financial resources and suitable infrastructure to enable them to have access to and use of the Internet and therefore they were not able to exchange information with relevant regional and international institutions on issues pertaining to the preparation of their initial national communications.

H. Availability of human, financial and technical resources

31. Some countries stated that they were constrained by the low capacity of the members of the national climate change committees and the limited number of relevant sectoral experts/specialists, which undermined the collection of relevant data necessary for the completion of GHG inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments and GHG mitigation analysis.

32. Many Parties indicated that financial resources were urgently required to translate and disseminate relevant technical material that was often published only in English. The absence of information in local and/or national languages was identified as a serious barrier to capacity-building in many non-Annex I Parties.

33. Many of these Parties also recognized that not all countries would need the same level of external support required for climate change activities/initiatives, because the national circumstances between countries varied considerably.

IV. SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

34. A total of 13 presentations were made by five bilateral and eight multilateral support programmes on their experiences in facilitating and providing financial and technical support to non-Annex I Parties in the preparation of their initial national communications or elements thereof. The presentations covered the kinds and level of assistance provided, criteria used to facilitate or support activities and programmes and the lessons learned which may help and enhance the coordination and institutional arrangements for the preparation of national communications. The bilateral support programmes were: Danish International Development Agency; the Netherlands Climate Change Studies Assistance Programme; New Zealand Ministry of Environment; United States Agency for International Development; and the United States Country Studies Program. The multilateral support programmes were: the GEF, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research, IPCC Task Force on Greenhouse Gas Inventories, the United Nations Development Programme – National Communication Support Unit, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme Collaborating Centre for Energy and Environment, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, and the World Bank.

35. Many of the technical problems and constraints that the support programmes had recognized were similar to those identified by non-Annex I Parties themselves. They related to lack of appropriate institutional arrangements and of capacity/expertise and data.

36. In recognition of these technical problems and constraints in non-Annex I Parties, some of the bilateral and multilateral programmes have either put in place or planned to put in place activities and programmes that will contribute to capacity-building (institutional and human) and training.

A. Institutional arrangements

37. Based on their experiences and the lessons learned in project implementation in non-Annex I Parties, the bilateral and multilateral programmes have identified a number of key institutional issues, which may help enhance the institutional arrangements for project implementation in non-Annex I Parties, including those that are necessary for the preparation of national communications:

(a) Greater involvement and participation by key policy stakeholders should be encouraged from the beginning of the project cycle and/or at the project concept level;

(b) Political support and buy-in to the project and the enhancement of appropriate institutional frameworks for the preparation of national communications need to be strengthened;

(c) Engagement of in-country personnel in project activities and promotion of country ownership of project is essential;

(d) Provision of financial and technical support and integration of project activities and outputs with national policies and strategies are required;

(e) Building and maintaining the capacity of national and/or regional expertise to collect, process and analyse data for use in the preparation of national communications and in planning for sustainable development should be strengthened;

(f) Studies undertaken in the context of the preparation of national communications should be focused on national priorities.

B. Capacity-building and training

38. In-depth and long-term technical training on various elements of the national communication (e.g. national GHG inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments, and GHG mitigation analysis) is vital in developing a pool of experts in non-Annex I Parties.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

39. The experts at the workshop recommended a number of specific actions that would enhance the process of preparation of national communications by non-Annex I Parties by strengthening institutional arrangements, capacity-building and training, and coordination of activities and programmes relating to the preparation of national communications.

A. Institutional arrangements

40. Stakeholders, including policy makers, national and/or regional universities, institutions of higher learning and research and regional organizations, should be continually engaged and involved in preparing national communications.

41. National institutions responsible for climate change issues should be strengthened or, if they do not already exist, established.

42. Use of regional institutions and/or experts, where appropriate, should be encouraged in project activities relating to the preparation of national communications.

43. Roles and responsibilities, including services to be provided by the GEF and its implementing agencies, during the project implementation, should be detailed in the project document.

44. Formal mid-term evaluation of project activities should be done on a regular basis, so as to identify and deal with emerging/potential problems and constraints.

45. Synergies between climate change and other environmental activities/programmes should be promoted. For example, Parties are encouraged to participate in activities relating to the national platforms for disaster reduction and initiatives on global change research.

46. South–South cooperation on climate change issues should be promoted.

B. Capacity-building and training

47. Regional, subregional and national training workshops should be supported and conducted on a continuing basis to help strengthen and/or build national capacities, mainly in the areas of GHG inventories for agriculture and LUCF, methodologies for vulnerability and adaptation assessments and the applications of models for GHG mitigation analysis.

48. Lessons learned from regional projects, such as the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change (CPACC) and the Pacific Islands Climate Change Assistance Programme (PICCAP), should be encouraged and replicated in other regions, where appropriate.

49. Publication of research results emanating from project activities relating to the preparation of national communications should be encouraged and rewarded.

50. Greater efforts should be made to sensitize key stakeholders, including policy makers, on climate change issues, on a regular basis.

51. The IPCC material should be translated and disseminated widely within the countries.

52. Training should be provided to Parties in the use of the IPCC Good Practice Guidance and Uncertainty Management for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories.

53. Parties should be made aware of and provide input to the database being prepared by the IPCC on emission factors.

54. The IPCC should give more attention to guidelines on vulnerability and adaptation issues, and should be encouraged to provide training on the understanding and use of these guidelines.

C. Coordination

55. Links between national institutions and the GEF and its implementing agencies should be strengthened. In addition, a permanent dialogue between national enabling activities and other projects funded by the GEF should be encouraged.

56. Information sharing and networking should be encouraged and promoted within and between countries and regions by using existing regional and global channels, such as the CGE.

57. Programmes and activities funded and supported by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies should be better coordinated and should ensure equitable provision of assistance to non-Annex I Parties in the preparation of their national communications.

58. An information sharing mechanism should be developed and hosted by a relevant agency/institution, such as the UNFCCC secretariat, to provide information on assistance programmes that support the preparation of national communications or any of their elements.

D. Financial and technical support

59. The level of financial resources for the preparation of national communications should be commensurate with the needs of the reporting obligations under the UNFCCC.

60. Parties should, in accordance with decision 10/CP.2, request funding from the GEF, as an operating entity of the financial mechanism, for regional projects on the development of emission factors and collection of activity data. They should also request funds for the preparation of second national communications, in accordance with decision 8/CP.5.

61. Parties should prioritize the areas for which financial assistance is most needed and therefore future GEF guidance for expedited procedures should not be prescriptive.

62. Financial and technical assistance should be provided for project management in addition to project implementation.